

been affirmed by many, many economists. It will be fully paid for and, at the same time, will reduce some of the bottlenecks and high costs that people have. It will lower people's costs in many ways. Particularly, we are making regular progress to lower prescription drug prices as we work to refine the agreement.

The framework will also make healthcare more affordable, cut taxes for working and middle-class Americans, and most importantly, provide long-sought ladders for families to climb up to the middle class and give them the stability needed to stay in the middle class once they get there.

It will lower costs for people in many different ways—one of our main goals. This will be just what the American people need, and it will not be—will not be—inflationary.

So the announcement last week from the President brought us one step closer toward our goal of delivering help to the American people at every stage of their lives. We are going to keep working this week to get this legislation over the finish line. Democrats are committed to rewarding the trust that the American people have placed in us.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Madam President, on judges and nominations, last week, the Senate confirmed seven—seven—more judges to serve lifetime appointments on the Federal bench.

Just about all of them were people of color; all but two were women. Among them were more Federal defenders, civil rights lawyers, election experts. They will bring sorely needed diversity to the judiciary—not just personal diversity or demographic diversity, as important as that is, but professional diversity as well, adding to the breadth and width and depth of knowledge possessed by the courts.

It is no longer a bench that we are appointing that is simply prosecutors or partners in large law firms, but many, many others from walks of life with different and needed perspectives on the Federal bench.

Today, we are going to pick up right where we left off. Later this afternoon, we will vote to confirm Beth Robinson, of Vermont, to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Toby Heytens to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

A former clerk to the late Justice Ginsburg, Mr. Heytens is a veteran of the Justice Department and is the current Solicitor General of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He is regarded by both sides of the aisle as a superbly skilled lawyer and an impartial thinker.

In Justice Robinson, who has spent 10 distinguished years on the Vermont State Supreme Court, the Senate is presented with another experienced, dedicated, and historic nominee. She would be the very first openly gay

woman to serve not just in the Second Circuit, but in any Federal circuit court in the country—another barrier torn down in the halls of justice. We are proud of tearing down those barriers and making the bench more inclusive and more like America. I look forward to her confirmation today.

In the weeks and months to come, Senate Democrats will continue pressing ahead to bring balance back to our Federal courts with diverse, mainstream, qualified, and impartial jurists.

JOHN R. LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Madam President, on the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and cloture, the fight to protect our democracy from voter suppression and election subversion continues in the U.S. Senate. Later this evening, I will file cloture on the motion to proceed to the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, setting up a vote to take place on Wednesday.

This bill, which my friends, Senators LEAHY and DURBIN, worked assiduously to put together, will restore the key protections of the Voting Rights Act—the crowning achievement of the civil rights era—that were wrongly gutted in one of the worst decisions the Supreme Court has made in a long time—in 2013, the Shelby decision—done by a conservative majority on the Court.

Specifically, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would update the preclearance protections that prohibited States with records of voter suppression from making changes to election law without Federal approval.

Recent history makes absolutely clear that we need these protections on the books. Thanks to the Shelby decision, we now live in an era of increased voter suppression in the United States. After that decision, States like Texas and North Carolina, sadly, sprang into action to make it harder for minority, younger, and lower income people to vote. Many more States followed years later, and we are suffering the consequences of that decision to this day.

Few of the Justices had thought, I believe, that we didn't need these preclearances because there is no more voter discrimination. Lord, were they wrong. We must reverse their awful Shelby decision.

If there is anything that merits debate here in the Senate, it is protecting the precious right of Americans to participate in our elections. Since its original passage, the Voting Rights Act has been updated five times—five times—with support from both Democrats and Republicans. We should, likewise, proceed this time around on this time-honored measure.

I want to make clear: If the Senate votes to proceed on to the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, I am prepared to offer a full-fledged debate befitting this great Chamber. Re-

publicans will be given the chance to raise their objections, to offer amendments, and to make changes to the bill. I know that both parties have serious disagreements on this important issue, so we want to hear from the other side what they propose. But for that to happen, we need to start debate first; we need to vote to allow the Senate to work through its process; we need 60 votes simply to say we will debate this issue. We will get a chance to see what happens this week.

Time is really getting short for the Senate to take action on voting rights before Americans go to the polls in the 2022 elections. It is essential that we restore preclearance protections before the start of next year, when States are set to consider another round of restrictive voting rights laws when their legislative sessions start in the spring.

Indeed, the dangerous and draconian Republican laws we have seen in 2021 are only the beginning if this body doesn't take action, and they are a very serious threat to our democracy—one of the greatest threats to democracy that has come around in a long time.

So I hope both parties will proceed on legislation that has long enjoyed bipartisan support in this Chamber. Our democracy demands we act.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, well, the American people are hurting. Inflation just hit another 30-year record high. Families are paying skyrocketing prices for everyday needs. The murder rate across the country just recorded its biggest jump ever.

But here is what the Biden administration has focused on: handing out six-figure and seven-figure payments to illegal immigrants.

A few years back, liberal interest groups started trying to sue the U.S. Government on behalf of illegal immigrants. They wanted American taxpayers to pay out legal damages because of the conditions some people faced as they tried to break into our country illegally.

As a legal matter, these lawsuits were borderline frivolous. Our government was all but certain to win the suits, but this administration wants to stand down and voluntarily pay out massive damages: "The U.S. Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services are considering payments that could amount to close to \$1 million a family"—\$1 million a family, about a half a million dollars per adult, and about a half a million dollars more per child.

American families are having to anxiously budget for gas and groceries, but

President Biden wants to literally make millionaires out of people who have violated Federal law.

What could be more unfair and unjust to law-abiding, tax-paying American citizens?

And talk about yet another massive incentive for more and more people to come here illegally: On President Biden's watch, we have already seen an alltime high in illegal border crossings, combined with a decade low in arrests in the interior.

So Democrats have already created a major border crisis, and now they want to cut seven-figure checks to illegal border crossers?

Democrats are already trying to send monthly welfare payments to people who are here illegally. That is in the reckless taxing-and-spending spree they are putting together behind closed doors.

But who needs \$300 a month when President Biden wants to send these folks \$450,000 per person?

That is four and a half times the payment that the Department of Defense sends to the survivors of servicemembers who were killed in action. Fallen troops' families get \$100,000 from the Pentagon. But the Biden administration wants to give illegal immigrants \$450,000?

This is an especially extreme example of a big error that Democrats continue to make over and over again.

The left mistakenly thinks that a compassionate border means a weak border. They think compassion requires weakness—weak security, weak enforcement, weak on upholding the rule of law. And now, apparently, we are a cruel country unless we hand out a million dollars per family to illegal immigrants who sue America.

But the entire concept is dead wrong. It is not compassion to lure people from all over the world through dangerous journeys with the promise of open-borders socialism. In fact, the government paying out six-figure sums that multiply with every additional child in tow will only incentivize the riskiest and most dangerous kinds of illegal immigration. We will be guaranteeing that even more children are dragged along the dangerous journey.

Honestly, this absurd idea feels like a satirical policy proposal that Republicans would have invented to make a parody out of the radical left. Oh, and the next thing you know, they will be sending out million-dollar checks to illegal immigrants. But this is literally what the Biden administration wants to do, according to reports that they have not denied.

Out in the real world, American families already have enough reasons to worry about the administration's spending habits. The inflation kicked off by Democrats' springtime binge has wiped out wage gains and made family budgets even harder to square.

One recent report on soaring food prices included this quote from a shopper out in Indiana: "You have to pick

and choose. Before, you didn't have to do that. You could just go in and buy a week or two's worth of food. Now, I can barely buy one week's worth."

That is a sobering reality that too many Americans are dealing with, and it isn't limited to the grocery store. Folks in my hometown of Louisville have seen gas prices jump a full dollar in the past year. Feeding a family is getting harder. Filling up the tank is getting harder. Even heating a home this winter is shaping up to be 30 percent more expensive than last year.

Even during a time of calm and prosperity, writing million-dollar checks to illegal immigrants would be an insult to American families, but it is 10 times more insulting at a time like this, when Democrats' policies are forcing so many households to tighten their belts.

These are the same Democrats who are putting finishing touches on yet another multimillion dollar—multitrillion dollar reckless taxing-and-spending spree. So in the days and weeks ahead, when the far left tries to sell America on historic inflationary spending, historic tax hikes, and more micromanaging of American life by politicians, just remember, these are the same politicians who have proposed giving millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to people who broke Federal law to enter our country.

The same people who think that is a great idea want license to transform our entire economy.

Look around. I am not sure how much more of this transformation American families can stomach.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jonathan Davidson, of Maryland, to be Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

NOMINATION OF TOBY J. HEYTENS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Toby Heytens to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

He is an accomplished appellate advocate, with a depth of experience and a fair-mindedness that would make him an asset to the Fourth Circuit. He started as a clerk on the Third Circuit, completed a prestigious fellowship at the Justice Department's Office of the

Solicitor General, and then he clerked for Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Not a bad resume.

After a few years in private practice, Mr. Heytens rejoined the Justice Department as an assistant to the Solicitor General. Most recently, he was Solicitor General for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

He is a distinguished academic—taught at Cornell Law School, joined the faculty at UVA Law School, codirected the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic.

Mr. Heytens has personally argued 10 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court—there aren't many people who can say that—and handled the briefing in more than 50 other cases before the Court, and the breadth of these cases is impressive.

With such credentials, it is not surprising he enjoys the strong support of Senators KAINE and WARNER.

He has been unanimously rated "well qualified" by the American Bar Association, and his nomination is supported by leaders in the legal community, including three former Republican Solicitors General under President George W. Bush.

He is a dedicated public servant. I will be voting for him, and I hope my colleagues will join me.

COVID-19

Madam President, on another matter, this weekend saw the happy return of a tradition in many neighborhoods.

Last night, my senatorial assignment was to be at the front door of my home in Springfield, IL, and pass out candy to the trick-or-treaters.

After a year off because of COVID, Halloween was back. We had at least 80, maybe 100, kids show up, and they were all having a great time, as we all remember our own youth.

What a difference vaccines can make. Slowly but surely, we are putting this pandemic behind us. And after a difficult year-plus of remote learning, kids are going back to school across America.

Three days ago, we received some long-awaited news that will enable parents to breathe another sigh of relief and allow children to be safely vaccinated. The FDA authorized Pfizer vaccinations for kids between ages 5 and 11.

While it is true that healthy children generally are at lower risk from this virus, they are not immune, and testing had to take place, and it has taken place. The new lower-dose COVID vaccine can protect our kids—and grandkids, I might add. And I want to do everything I can to make sure that happens.

I usually tell the story, which dates me, but I know the reality of my impression on those who are watching. I have been around a few years, and I remember in the 1950s, when we were scared to death of polio, and along came Jonas Salk—God bless his memory—with a new vaccine, and we all lined up, rolled up our sleeves, and got